

Rising Share of Undergraduates Come from Poor Families, Minority Groups

By Don Sutherland

On May 22, 2019, the Pew Research Center revealed that the overwhelming share of college enrollment growth over the past 20 years was driven by low-income students and ethnic minority students. Further, Pew noted that the biggest increase in poor and minority students occurred at the community college level, private four-profit schools, and among less selective four-year institutions.

Pew reported:

In 2016, 20% of dependent undergraduates were from families in poverty, a sharp rise from 1996 (12%). Since poverty in the wider 18- to 64-year-old population remained flat at about 12% during these same periods, it suggests that more poor students are participating in postsecondary education than 20 years earlier...

Reflecting broader changes in the U.S. population, racial and ethnic minorities are increasing as a share of undergraduates at public and private nonprofit four-year colleges and universities. The same is true at public two-year and private for-profit institutions, although whites remain the majority at four-year institutions.

Each of these trends has implications for financial aid, academic support services, and student support services to help ensure that the changing composition of undergraduates has maximum opportunity to graduate with a degree while mitigating the risk of their taking on an unsustainable debt burden in order to secure that degree.

The complete Pew report can be found [here](#).